

Death made tributary to the glory of God :

A SERMON

PREACHED IN GOULD STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TORONTO.

On SABBATH, 22nd AUGUST, 1869 :

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF THE

REV. DR. BURNS,

Professor of Church History in Knox' College :

BY

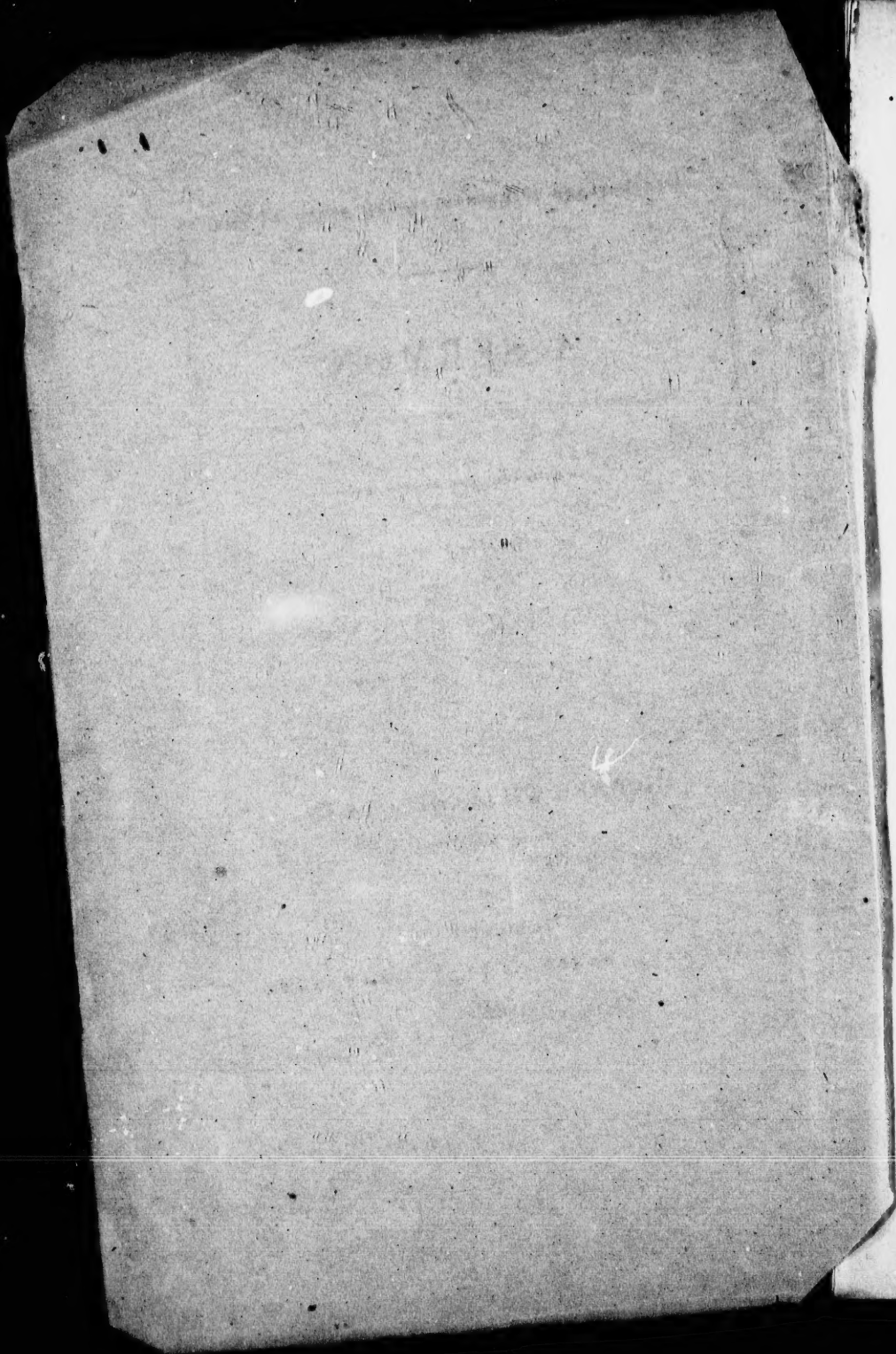
MICHAEL WILLIS, D.D., LL.D.,

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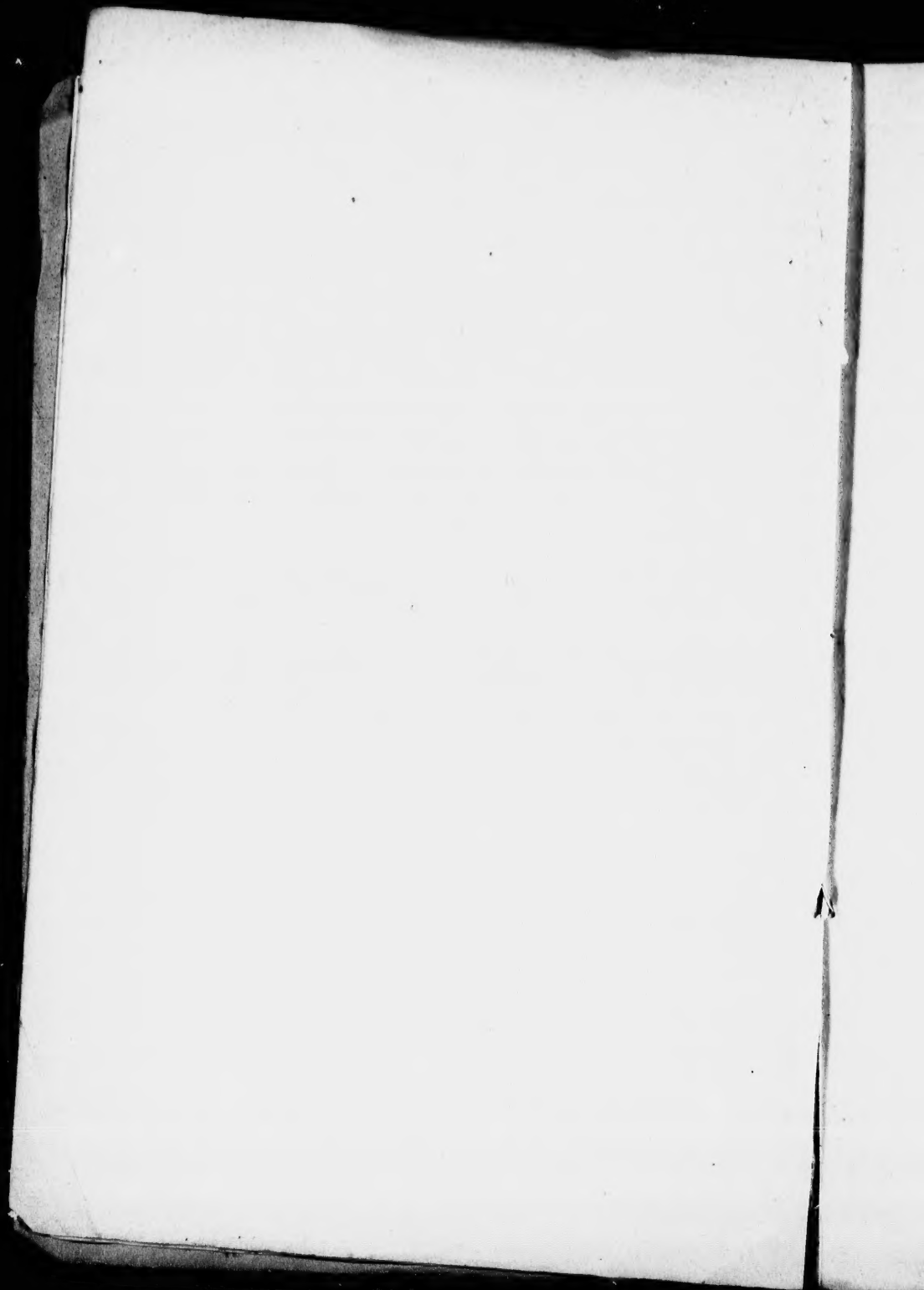
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS discourse, with its appended biographical notice, appears to a large extent just as it was spoken. A few sentences which escaped the memory, in the course of delivery, are here in their place. Some ideas towards the close of the doctrinal part, which were but presented in outline, have received their filling up. Others, belonging to the obituary part, are illustrated in foot notes. Those who are aware of the very brief notice on which the Author undertook the task will easily believe that it required some effort to rally his ideas, and present them, even in their less mature form; but he grudged not the effort, in the pleasing consciousness that, by complying with the request made, he was gratifying a reasonable wish of mourners, discharging a duty congenial to his own heart's promptings, and, he hopes, benefitting many, by an elucidation of some valuable points of truth. May the Lord the Spirit, the Comforter and Sanctifier, own the humble service, and make it to be for his praise!



A SERMON.

JOHN XXI. 19.

"This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

It has not been overlooked, as belonging to the very evidences of christianity, and of the Saviour's divine commission, that he on so many occasions foretold future events,—foretold them, too, with that particularity of detail or circumstance which bespeaks the confidence of the true prophet. We find him predicting the destinies of the infant church, and of his own nation; the part of other nations also relatively to it. In a second class of passages, he foretells his own sufferings, death, and resurrection, in terms of reserve indeed, and with consideration of what his humble attached followers were able to bear, yet with sufficient plainness to make the truth of his prophecies apparent as the events developed themselves:—these events again in their very kind being such as no mere human foresight could anticipate, and implying a test of truth to which no impostor would have committed himself. Thus, it is not his own death only that he foretells, but the

kind or manner of it,—“When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man;” he thus addresses his countrymen, though crucifixion is known to have been no Jewish but a Roman punishment; neither is it his resurrection only he foretells, but his resurrection on the third day. And who can fail to remark the calm self-possession with which he anticipates what was before him of humiliation and suffering, and the marked contrast between this unruffled composure so becoming one who knew himself fulfilling an eternal covenant, and the perplexity and trepidation often evinced by his immediate disciples? Again, there is a third class of passages,—and to this the words of our context belong—in which the Saviour foretells the future of particular individuals among the disciples themselves. There is something most touching in his language concerning both Peter and John. We see in his manner with these apostles at once the dignity of the master and the condescending familiarity of the friend. It was not the habit of Jesus to indulge needless curiosity; and he gently chides the ardent Peter, who still appears here in the closing stage of this Gospel narrative, in character shall I say? presuming somewhat too much on his friendship with his loved master. And so his question as to the future of his fellow apostle John, is only answered in obscure terms, accompanied with the suggestion to mind his present duty:

“Follow thou me.” Nor is it uninteresting to mark the evidence of the good man’s disposition to acquiesce. Jesus had already said, Follow me ; and observe, it is said that, turning about, Peter saw that other disciple coming after him—a proof, this, that Peter was already on the way. The words, Follow me, have with reason been interpreted, in the light of another passage, as meaning, Follow me in suffering : make up your mind to fellowship with me in the cross, for it is recorded in chapter thirteenth that when Simon Peter asked of Jesus, Whither goest thou, his divine master replied, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. The words, “thou shalt stretch forth thy hands” aptly apply to crucifixion, and it is the very uniform tradition of the early church that Peter died this manner of death at Rome, crucified on the same day on which Paul was beheaded—that is, about the year sixty-eight, or the last year of the Emperor Nero. It is, moreover, the tradition that the holy man was crucified with his head downwards, himself requesting it should be so : An admirable humility ; for it was not that he shunned conformity to his Lord, as not glorying in his cross ; but that, feeling himself unworthy of the honor of a literal fellowship with him, he would invite a lower shame for his sake. There are who doubt the fact even of Peter ever having been at Rome at all, and so do not receive

this tradition : but there is a remarkable concurrence of ancient testimonies in its favor, Greek, Latin and Syriac. The prediction of our Lord can hardly be understood to denote less than a death by violence, and the original words, "by what death" may, with strict accuracy, be rendered "by what kind of death." We do not dwell on this question, our object being to deal with the important truths implied in our text. Thus much we may add on the historical question, adopting the conclusion of Lardner, that, since it is generally admitted that the words in the context do comport with the tradition, describing in natural language the manner in which the sufferer by crucifixion submitted himself to preparation for that painful death ; and seeing that no other city but Rome claims to be the place of Peter's martyrdom ; we seem to be justified in accepting the unvarying testimony of antiquity on this point : which we can do without being in the least committed to an acquiescence in the absurd pretensions set up in Peter's name, to a universal episcopate for the good apostle himself, still less in the pretensions of his so called successors in the Roman See.

Coming to the text itself, then, we invite your attention to two leading thoughts suggested by it. One is, the certainty of death as the appointed lot of every man ; the other is that death is an appointed means of glorifying God. The certainty, you may

observe, is assumed rather than expressed, but only the more solemnly impressive. And death is not referred to in the abstract, but in its end or design ; it is not said, "signifying what death he should die, but by what, or what kind of, death he should glorify God." Let us meditate on these truths, looking for the divine blessing.

The certainty of death for all is here assumed : alas ! a fact familiar to us, and as to which our only danger is our allowing our familiarity with it to abate our sense of its importance.

It should affect us that a thing so strange in its nature should now be reckoned our natural lot : that none can escape it ; that all must make up their mind to it, the good, the bad ; the sainted apostle ! Is it, then, right to call death as some call it, the debt of nature ? No ! reason revolts at the thought. Who that reflects at all on what is observed on every side, of vanity, vexation, grief, but feels and is ready to say, Surely this world is not as it came from the creator's forming hand. Surely a good God cannot take delight in the misery of his creatures. Whence this universal sighing ? Whence are all the ties that bind us to one another in this state of existence liable to be so rudely broken ? How is it that man sickens and fades away, more evanescent than the very herb or flower of the field ? more,—for, as an ancient Scripture puts it, the herb or tree that fades

away revives, and through the scent of water is reproduced when Spring returns ; but man dieth, and where is he ? at least, as to all that is visible on earth, he has disappeared. And under what humbling conditions is the strongest frame dissolved, the fairest human flower rendered unsightly ! How under the ravages of sickness, and the process of dissolution, does what was loved, and is loved still, become revolting ; and affection itself says, Bury my dead out of my sight. This is *not* natural, it is something violatory of nature ; and in vain are all speculations on the cause till we come, and the philosopher must come, and take the explanation which the Bible gives us. Sin has entered—hence the change. Sin has entered, and death by Sin. How expressive is the language of the apostle Paul—(Rom. 5.) ! He personifies death as a monarch or tyrant of resistless power. “By one man’s offence, death has reigned by one ;” and never, we may say, was monarch or tyrant so inexorable ! Oh ! king of terrors, how innumerable are thy subjects, and how unrelenting the rigour of thy sway over them ! wherever the sons of Adam have been, they have obeyed thee : they who have placed the yoke on the neck of others have themselves bent to thine. By whatever lines of partition the territories of monarchs have been divided, of a truth thou disregardest them all, walkest over them all, challenging the earth as *thy* domain ;

and from thy dominion no age, no sex, no condition is free. Thou draggest the infant from the mother's breast, the mother from her helpless children. Thou comest unbidden to the banquet, and summonest princes from their revelry ; thou sendest thy pale messengers and surprisest the senator amidst his devices, the philosopher, the theologian ; the humble artificer, also, while plying his industrious craft. Thou waitest not for unfinished schemes, or new-bought acquisitions. Thou delightest, as it seems, to reverse human purposes, to turn the day of joy into mourning : thou destroyest the hope of man ! Has not the bridal chamber been darkened with the funereal pall ? has not the goodly mansion, as soon as built and garnished, yielded its intending occupant to the claim of the narrow house ? What thousands have paid this ghastly king tribute on the battle field, and on the deep sea ! What swarms of busy cities have been gathered into his dark repositories ; and still the grave saith not, It is enough !

Yes : there is no other explanation. Sin has entered and death has reigned. The sceptic may wrangle, the mocker may blaspheme : but the doctrine of the fall is written on all the pillars of the globe, and attested by every thing within us and around us. Hence the withering blight which has gone forth on the constitution of man ! hence creation groans ! hence every feeling of uneasiness ; every sigh of weakness ; every token of mortality !

Now, in the light of the ascertained cause, revelation also instructs us as to the end, or purpose, of death. It is true, God delights not in the misery of his creatures. When the freethinker says, a good God cannot so delight, we grant it to him. The thing which so appals us redounds in some way to God's glory. The language of our text suggests the question, how by death God is glorified? and we shall answer this by looking at death under three various aspects: (1) Death, as it is the universal law, the doom of a sinful race: (2) Death, as it has been submitted to by Christ, the surety: (3) As it still, though powerless, forever remains the lot of the saint. We love to preach Christ; and the second of these considerations is necessary to our full illustration of the third.

I. Death as the penalty of sin glorifies—need I say?—the retributive justice and holiness of the creator and divine Lawgiver. The word had gone forth, Dying thou shalt die; and the offence once committed, the commandment violated, the curse must needs come, even judgment on all men to condemnation. But though the immediate effect, this is not, blessed be God, the only, or the chief end. The inspired writer to the Romans (chap. 5) suggests another end, both of the offence and of the judgment. The law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

The reasoning of the apostle implies, that divine wisdom has taken occasion, by man's sin and ruin, to manifest the riches of divine mercy; or, sin has been over-ruled, and death as following in its train, as a foil to set off in surpassing lustre, the great redemption, and the benefits accruing to the objects of redeeming love from the doing and dying of the Son of God.

II. Let us view God as glorified in the death of his Son. We have affirmed that death is not the debt of nature, however it is now the law, the necessity of fallen nature. We equally affirm that to true christians it is no longer the debt of sin, as its expiation I mean; albeit the body even of the saint dies, in some sense, because of sin. If we but consider the reference of the Saviour's death to the law of God, and, I may add, to the love of God, we shall see the evidence of both these affirmations.

It is Christ who has paid the debt of sin. How, but as magnifying the righteous law, and as vindicating the divine holiness, can we account for the death of the Just one; and more than the death of the body, that agony of his human spirit endured by him in the garden and on the cross? Let the free thinker look here. Look here, you who say, when either the disorders of earth, or the threatened torments of hell, are the question: it cannot be that a good and great God can take pleasure in the sorrows

of poor imperfect creatures. We grant it. But explain, then, this mystery—a far greater one than the suffering of mere creatures, and sinful creatures. Here is the sinless one, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted! Yes; “of God!” it is not that Christ suffered at the hands of men. That is not the mystery: even a heathen philosopher, in his musings, could foretell that if virtue descended on earth, or a perfectly virtuous man mingled with the ordinary society of human beings, persecution at their hands would be sure to be his lot. But this is the mystery: He suffered at the hand of God, a just God himself. *He* not only permitted the suffering of the innocent one: It pleased the Lord to bruise him and to put him to grief: Himself put the cup into the hand of the innocent sufferer. Was it that he took pleasure in the suffering of his beloved Son? Nay, it was not that he loved him less: shall we say, then that he loved *us* more? Rather say, He loved our redemption more—loved—and the Son himself loved—the glory of the lawgiver more, the cause of righteousness more. Let the great sufferer himself explain the mystery. Hear him exclaiming, “Now is my soul troubled: Father, save me from this hour!” Hear him add—oh wondrous words!—“but for this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name.” This is the explanation. Die the sinner, or die the surety; or “justice must.” “He made him

to be sin, for us, him who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Hence, while we have said that death is not the debt of nature, we show our reason for also saying death is not, in the case of the saints, the debt of sin. It is not left to them to pay this debt, whatever relation their death has to sin as its original procuring cause. They are not called to glorify God, in satisfying his justice, or redressing the wrong to his law. Justice is satisfied—the law honoured—yea, magnified already. Yes; God has been glorified in the highest—for never was sin so seen in its demerit and turpitude as in the cross; never the law so seen in its dread majesty; but, alike, never as in the cross did divine love appear in its magnitude and intensity;—passing knowledge "in its length and breadth, its depth and height."

And so sin and death are turned into ministers of good to ransomed men, as well as of glory to the divine Lawgiver, and the praise of abounding mercy. For, grace reigns unto eternal life, through righteousness: "Reigns"—whatever of resistless power we have found associated in the personification of death as a tyrant and enemy, is, to say the least, associated with this personification of grace. But the apostle says "much more." If from the king of terrors there is no escape; to the designs of grace there shall be no hindrance. Death reigns a usurper. Grace is now

enthroned on righteousness, and in efficacy as well as certainty shall it not equal, yea, surpass? the life lost is more than retrieved. Death has come by the one man—justification for many offences: who can estimate the righteousness of the second, in its value? who can estimate the eternal life which is, on the ground of it, and in proportion to it—the gift of God?

III. God is glorified in the death of the saint. It may be asked if, neither as being the debt of nature, the saint glorifies God by death, nor as being the debt of sin, in what sense is it left him to glorify God in dying? Passively, we answer; actively also:—passively, as death, in common with all the tribulations which belong to his state of pilgrimage, deepens his sense of dependence, and affords occasion for divine strength being perfected in his weakness:—actively, as it affords scope for the exercise of every grace of the christian character, and especially the patience and faith of the saints.

The question has indeed sometimes exercised the thoughts of devout as well as speculative minds, why a christian should be subjected to the law of death at all, now that the ransom has been paid, and the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Indeed, of a truth, we might answer, death is to the christian destroyed: he has passed from under death, in all that is penal and

most formidable in it ; so that the Saviour says of him that believeth in Him, that he shall never die. Death unstinged is as no death. However, in a sense, the body indeed is " dead because of sin, while the spirit is life because of righteousness." But, then, what remains of death and of the humiliation of the grave is but a step to the believer's exaltation,—a part of that process of change by which the sanctification of the heir of glory is perfected—a change affecting the soul in the first instance, but the body also, in purifying and refining it into a meet associate for a perfected spirit—a change by which it regains its pristine vigour and beauty, or more than its pristine, in a conformity to Christ's glorious body. It may belong to the necessary education of the soul itself, that through the felt oppressions of the clay tabernacle in which it groans being burdened, it shall receive indelible impressions of the power of that moral contagion of sin so long adhering to the flesh : while, like the remembrance of life's sorrows, this may enhance the enjoyment of heaven's purity as well as rest ;—evoke more ardent admiration and louder praise of the patience that forbore, the power that upheld, the grace that, after they have suffered a while, and by that suffering, made the children of God perfect, strengthened, settled them. Yes ; God works in a mysterious way,—brings great results from seeming opposites. The corn of wheat must

die in the ground, to vegetate and bear fruit. He who asks, why should a christian die at all? might ask as well, why suffer at all? or, why is his sanctification not perfected at once as is his justification—why permitted to sin at all? or, as well ask, why the captain of salvation was himself perfected through suffering? Could he not have converted the world, as by miracle, by coming down from the cross, when the enemy blasphemously taunted him: "He saved others; himself he cannot save." He came not down: fixed to the accursed tree he remained, but not from any incapacity to save himself apart from his own love and covenant. He did a greater thing, when, in dying, he overcame death; and if he shunned not the grave, even as he abhorred not the virgin's womb, he glorified his power more by overcoming the king of terrors in the very citadel of his kingdom, spoiling the grave of its victory, as he fulfilled that word, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" giving earnest, thus, of his final triumph over the last enemy, when the grave, obedient to his mandate, shall yield up all its captives, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.

Flesh and blood, says Paul, cannot inherit the kingdom of God: not that matter is inherently evil—an error into which some early sects fell,—but that once tainted by sin, and, in the case of many who have obtained mercy, bearing the traces of its former servitude to the wicked one, it may be needful that,

like the house vitiated by the fretting leprosy, it be taken down, disorganized, dissolved—ere it shall be fitted to bear the image of the heavenly.

Finally ; not passively only, is God glorified by the death of the saints : the text suggests by its language that actively the dying disciple is to glorify God : The words describe his duty as well as his destiny. And it is of vital importance to see the relation of a christian's work, whether in living or dying, to his well-being and peace. Our Saviour furnishes a solution of this matter. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit" (John 15). Let it be observed, all obedience is *fruit* ; life is presupposed—union to himself—the spiritual engrafting. It is not honouring God to account the christian's death—even martyrdom—a meritorious expiation. So some have spoken of the baptism of blood effecting in the case of martyrs what the baptism of water and of the spirit may have effected for others. Away with such a thought !* The exercise of the christian's grace in

* For evidence that some in the earlier centuries ascribed to martyrdom such an efficacy ("lavacrum sanguinis") see *Hermas' Pastor*, or *Tertullian* ; "Vitam vobis (says *Hermas*, addressing the martyrs) donat Dominus—delicta enim vestra vos gravabant : et nisi passi essetis hujus nominis causa, propter peccata certe vestra mortui eratis Deo." So *Tertull. de resur.*, "Nemo enim peregrinatus a corpore statim immoratur penes Dominum, nisi ex martyrii prerogativa recedat paradiso, non inferis diversurus."

The death of a martyr was supposed to efface sin, and to introduce the person immediately to paradise. Some think the error was founded on a misinterpretation of such scriptures as *Mat. v. 10-12* ; *Mark x. 39* ; *Rev. vi. 9.*, &c.—and they observe an analogy in the idea with that of the ancient Greeks in assigning to heroes the first claim to the Elysium, or the isles of the blessed.

the act of dying, like each instance of his new obedience, belongs to the head of thank-offering, the obedience of love: it can be no sin offering. It belongs to the "much fruit" of which our Lord speaks, or of which his apostle speaks who says of all the fruits of righteousness, they are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Still; there is a grand lesson implied in our text; it is that even dying is to the christian not a lot inevitable only but a work prescribed, a work of faith, in which it concerns him that he acquit himself meekly.

Too often the limit of men's desire as to death, next, at least, to the being prepared for what is beyond it, is to be resigned to the event. A higher part is here indicated as belonging to the christian's calling. The final scene, as well as every previous stage of the earthly journey, is a theatre on which his various graces are to be proved and exhibited—not patience only, and meek submission, but love to God and man, and faith's tranquil, if not exulting, confidence in the expectation of eternal life. The very valley of death is still a field on which the soldier of the cross may win honors, not for himself, but for his Lord, according as every word of his, and every act may be, or may fail to be, edifying to others, and commendatory of the Gospel of Christ. It seems as if this were Paul's meaning in those expressions so brief but pregnant: "whether we live

we live unto the Lord, whether we die we die unto the Lord." "To the Lord!" it is not safety alone he thinks of; nor his well being, though to die is gain: the true soldier of Jesus owns his Lord's propriety in his latest acts or aspirations—for so the apostle interprets his words again, as he thus describes his utmost wish, "that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." (Phil. i.)

And what variety is to be seen in the modes of death, and seasons of death, affording corresponding varieties in the opportunity and means of God being glorified both actively and passively! To Peter and John, as we have it in the record, different parts were assigned: to Peter, "to stretch forth his hands;" and he failed not, when his hour as a confessor came. John, no less a martyr in spirit, according to history scarcely less in act,—saved from a cruel death as by miracle,—was reserved to honour in exile the same testimony of Jesus. Who can doubt that the one end of glorifying God was in view of the supreme disposer as to both, though more specially expressed as to the one? Ever present to his own mind, he Jesus recognises this end through every scene of his earthly course. When he spake of his own sufferings, this, as we have seen, was the thought that stilled to acquiescence his troubled spirit. This was his explanation of the sickness of Lazarus whom he loved: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory

of God, that the son of God might be glorified thereby" (John xi.) "Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." So to the mourning sister ; just as he said to the inquirer concerning the man born blind ; "It is that the works of God should be made manifest in him ;" and what else should be our explanation of the variety in the life and the death, the allotted spheres, and the meted trials of christians. Some die early ; early they are withdrawn from the field of conflict ; spared the encounter with the world's rude blasts, which, with others, precedes the heavenly rest. It has sometimes been said—has passed indeed into a sort of proverb in the mouth of certain observers—such a child or youth is too good to live long. Like many sentimental aphorisms, this needs qualification. It is rather against it that the loved disciple John lived the longest of the apostles, seeing the very close of the first century. It may be allowed that God does now and again do a great work in a little time, thus glorifying his power and grace. He saves even at the eleventh hour, so glorifying his sovereignty : who may question his right to do what he wills with his own ? But it is far from being always true that those withdrawn early, or removed from the militant church in mid-time of their days, are riper for heaven, in the ordinary sense of the expression, than many who have been left behind, and have

been full of years ere they have been gathered into the garner. Perfected, of course, each must have been at death ; but in all the symptoms of comparative ripeness that fell under others eyes, they may have been inferior to many of their survivors, whether in the fervour of devotion, or in the abundance of their good works. It is hard to say which is more honoured, he who is earlier released from labours, and received to his reward, or he who is trusted longer,—shall we say needed more ? at the post of difficulty and danger,—longer spared to represent the master's cause on earth—reserved, it may be, for a brighter crown in connection with harder toils. Is it not said, they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars for ever and ever ? The sentiment of our context forbids any nice adjustment of this question : “What is that to thee ?” follow thou me. Grudge not his free and full salvation to the labourer of the one hour ; the labourer of many hours owes all to the same grace. Let the beauteous moral picture have our mede of admiration, when from the lips of the comparative suckling God perfects praise. But we account it not less beauteous when we behold the aged pilgrim holding on his way with unfaltering confidence in the God for whose salvation he has long waited ; enduring without a murmur the tribulations of the long and weary road ; more humble, more gentle, more weaned from the world, more

loving to his associates in the heavenward journey. Grudge not, if the Shepherd, descending into his garden, sees it meet to remove the tender lily to a more congenial clime. But we shall not doubt the wisdom or love that spares another, like the cedar of Lebanon, to bear the buffeting of life's storms to the praise of God's grace: or, like the palm tree, still to yield his fruit when others fade. It is to show that the Lord is upright: a rock of confidence to the end:—

Often has the glory of the natural horizon under the lingering rays of a departing sun, suggested itself to observers as a like moral radiance has gilded the hour of the saint's descent to the grave; and all the faith and love of a long life have seemed gathered into the chastened, but assured, accents of the pilgrim's latest utterance; and, even when the voice has uttered its last, have lingered in the eye, as it looked forth loving still; yet upward, longing for the nearing glory; and the dying one has seemed to say to loved ones around, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know!"*

* The author knows that it will not be grudged to him, by the reader, if he indulges filial affection by embalming in this note the memory of honoured parents, both dying in a good old age, and both of whom, with others, however, also, have been present to his mind, when describing the death bed of the saint. Never can he forget the reverential yet confiding and serene word and air of the one, so worthy of a Mother in Israel, a pattern of every domestic virtue: nor ever forget the meek and weaned air (in the case of the other) of a naturally high spirit, the superiority to every earthly passion, the silence under sense of remembered wrongs, and assured filial reliance on his heavenly father—the fitting close of a life of singular piety, and of a ministry honoured by no few tokens of the master's acceptance. This reminiscence is the less irrelevant, as it was at least one element in the writer's regard for his senior colleague in Knox College, (a feeling partly fraternal, partly filial), that not seldom he was reminded, besides his silver locks, by his whole presence and bearing, his lively manners, yet with dignity and courtesy, of his revered father.

OBITUARY, OR MONUMENTAL, PART.

THE subject, you will perceive, has been chosen not without reference to the decease of one long known and revered among us, and to the value of whose services it affords me pleasure to bear my hearty testimony. Of Dr. Burns' many labours in this land of his adoption, I need the less speak, as I should have to repeat, probably, much that has been said by your pastor in the morning.* It may be more appropriate, that having had the opportunity of knowing the venerable departed longer than most about me here, and of observing his labours in what is called among us the old country, I should bear chiefly on these, not omitting his most recent services in our Theological college. My attention was drawn to our deceased friend in the comparative youth of my own ministry, and towards the mid-time of his, as one taking a very prominent part in the cause of evangelical religion, and watchfully guarding the rights and interests of the christian people, at a time when this required no small vigilance and resolution. Men may acquire, on very cheap terms, the reputation of friends of the evangelical interest, when the tide has come to turn in its favour; but it is due to Dr. Burns to say that he stood against the current when that ran in the contrary way. It is known that a blight had extensively come over churches in Scotland, England, and Ireland, half, or say, three

* The pastor of the church in which the family of the deceased sat had conducted the morning service: an arrangement the more fitting, as the deceased himself had latterly ministered on many occasions in the pulpit of the same church (Gould Street.) Indeed, during not a few months of the vacancy in that charge occasioned by the return to Scotland of the former minister, my reverend and learned friend, Professor Taylor, Dr. Burns had largely taken on himself the responsibility of the pastorate; a generosity which the congregation, when again provided with a minister, honourably showed itself capable of appreciating.

quarters of a century ago; and in the church of Scotland a full exhibition of the truth was, if I may not say the exception rather than the rule, at any rate far less general than happily it came to be in more recent years. Our deceased father and brother took no unimportant share in the work of revival, and reassertion of the true principles of our Scottish Presbyterianism:—and, when I say Presbyterianism, I do not merely think of church government, but of the catechetical and confessional doctrines of our loved native land. I know that in the sphere of his immediate pastorate, (in Paisley) his influence was powerfully felt in the very earliest years of his ministry. I remember,—on occasion, I think it was, of my first revisiting Scotland, after my coming to this country—that in a conversation held with me by a worthy minister, now also deceased, who either was of Paisley as his native town, or during his student life had been familiar with that locality, he said that the exertions of Dr. Burns there, in his youth and vigour, told with most observable effect on the community. Not that that Scottish town was without faithful spiritual labourers both in other denominations and in his own; but, in his immediate pastoral sphere, and around, a far livelier interest came to be evinced in religious observances, appliances adapted to the young and to the masses of the population were multiplied, and beyond his more denominational range (so I understood my reverend informer) the example of his energy and public spirit provoked to a praiseworthy emulation.

But I look at our departed friend not as the pastor only, but in his more public and standing out attitude, as a member of church courts, and of the general community, by his pen as well as his voice pleading for the right: and I cannot but regard him as having been, for no few years,

one of the bulwarks of Scottish evangelism and public morality.

His mind naturally addicted to historic investigation, and his principles disposing him to venerate the memory of our Scottish martyrs, we find him appropriately employed in editing the works of Wodrow, and by various contributions from his pen through influential organs of public opinion seeking to extend a knowledge, and revive the influence of the early Scottish confessors.

I recognise the same disposition in his care of the memory of one who was more his own contemporary, the late Dr. Stevenson McGill, of Glasgow University, one whom I also shall ever venerate, having had the privilege for more than one season of waiting on his prelections as a Theological Professor; and whom Dr. Burns highly estimated as having given large impulse to the cause of ecclesiastical revival, in the West of Scotland especially.

Nor was it in the ecclesiastical field only that the influence of the father we this day mourn was exerted and felt.

I honour much and know well his labours in more than one department of philanthropy, beyond the range of direct pastoral work, though not alien from it. It was given to him beyond many to see the defects of the Scottish poor law, defects which were indeed recognised, so far, by assemblies after assemblies of the church; the provision for the poor being acknowledged to be in a great measure illusory in numerous parishes of Scotland. But the real remedy was tardily applied. Our departed friend contended for the establishing of a legal provision more adapted to the changed circumstances of Scotland, and for a very considerable modification of what was tenaciously cherished by some as the

Scottish system, though perhaps rather to be called the misapplication to an altered state of society of an ancient scheme, which Knox and our early ecclesiastics acquiesced in, as a necessity of their times, rather than approved.

The state has rightly, with the general consent of the Scottish mind, revolutionized its scheme of providing for the poor. No legislation in such an interest can meet every difficulty, and abuses must be watched against. But the principles of the new arrangement, I verily believe, are in far more harmony with a right jurisprudence, and with the laws of the Bible, than what prevailed for a century before. Dr. Burns in pressing his views on the public,—views which I cordially supported along with him,—had to oppose the specious pleadings of men of no small name, who set off with much eloquence views honourable enough to their warmth of heart, but neither resting on a solid philosophy, nor sustained by legitimate reasonings from the word of God. It is too large a subject to discuss in a Pulpit discourse; but the principle contended for by our departed friend is, mainly, that a direct responsibility lies on the body politic for the care of its destitute members, a responsibility which it may not wisely nor righteously devolve on sectional churches, or ecclesiastical functionaries. These last, of course, have a duty, and a very sacred one, incumbent on them as concerns the oversight of the poor, especially the poor members of the church—though we cannot admit that the state may ignore the direct claim even of these as citizens. But a safe as well as a just policy requires that so great an interest as the common pauperism of a realm be not left to the hap-hazard inspection of officials whose time and opportunity for adequate attention to it is uncertain: nor is it just to churches to assume—as was too long assumed—their sufficiency to provide the means of alimentering a na-

tion's poor. Hence, in what is now called the old system, the admitted and oft lamented inefficiency of the Scottish provision, necessitating, for eking it out, mendicancy with all its demoralizing effects; and, more serious still perhaps, the withdrawal from their proper spiritual vocation of religious functionaries—an evil this latter seen and regretted by none more than earnest opponents of the change which became necessary; though they strangely failed to see that the cause of the evil was inherent in the very principle of the system they were so eager to uphold. Of course, I do not forget that, in upholding it, they counted on a larger provision of religious appliances: and, who can deny that these in good working will diminish the pauperism of a country, by diffusing moral and industrious habits?—but, besides all that is uncertain and contingent in the assumed harmonious action of sects; we may not assume that spiritual officials can be created at pleasure; nor that the vicissitudes of a country may not involve even virtuous citizens in distress on a scale far outrunning optional efforts to meet the exigency; nor, finally, that it is for the interests of religion itself that the invidious task of deciding on the poor citizen's claim for bread—even the claim of the irreligious citizen—should be left in the hands of the ministers and representatives of a gospel of charity and peace.

Besides the larger writings of Dr. Burns on this important question, a small synopsis of his argument, in a mere fly-leaf, came some time ago into my hands—I may have seen it before, but had forgotten it—of which I said to him, that no abler piece of reasoning ever came from his pen.*

* It is an amazing proof how far an amiable enthusiasm may overpower an able man's logic, when such an argument as the following could satisfy the mind of Dr. Chalmers. In referring to our Lord's words, "give to every

On one other great question of philanthropy I have also pleasure in paying a just tribute to our departed friend's discernment as well as humanity. He laboured for the abolition of slavery in British possessions and in America. He saw, what many were slow to see, that that form of oppression was no mere abuse of the domestic relation of master and servant, as not a few vainly argued, but involved a claim in itself wrong, to an absolute and in effect irresponsible power, unsafe for any superior to wield, and incompatible, in the inferior with inviolable rights of humanity and of conscience. In my common views with him on this subject lay one bond of our fellowship. We encountered cold looks from men of whom we had a right to expect better things: and, not seldom, we were told that we were insisting on more than the Bible re-

one that asketh thee," he seriously seeks support in this word "ask" for his argument against an extended civil provision for the poor, and for the allowance of a system of beggary to eke out the uncertain ecclesiastical and parochial scheme he pleads for—the allowance of it at least in preference to the introducing of a regular anticipative provision—that it is a sort of "religious wrong to extinguish that condition on which Christ hath made the duty of giving to depend." Surely the eloquent philanthropist might have seen that, besides that no system has proposed to extinguish *asking*, yea, on the highway, in cases of sudden occurrence, or exceptional urgency, the theory he was so opposed to, whether as existing in England, (it is the principle of the system, not its abuses, we are looking to), or as proposed for Scotland, and now in substance largely adopted there, presupposes "asking," in some form, or application for relief. The question is as to the mode of *asking*; and surely humanity, as well as decency, is better protected by an anticipative provision, with a certain and responsible agency charged with the duty of discriminating truth from imposture, though also of promptly meeting ascertained necessity; than by a system exposing the sensibility of virtuous poor to the shock of rude repulses, or the humiliation of soliciting aid of every passer by; and no less exposing the giver to be at every turn assailed by the clamorous appeals of the thriftless and sturdy vagrant: yet Dr. Chalmers goes so far as to say he would have society to face mendicancy, even to the extreme of the coarsest vagrancy rather than acquiesce in a legal poor rate on a comprehensive scale.

(See vol. xx of Chalmers's Works, or vol. ii of his Political Economy.)

quired. We knew and felt it to be otherwise. We saw the puerility of the distinction attempted to be made between slavery *per se* (as it was phrased) and slavery in its abuses. We saw that these abuses were not accidents of the system, but its essence; and we denied that any exceptional dispensation of the Almighty, allowing to a certain people a certain interference with the natural liberties of others, any more authorises communities of men, without like warrant, to tamper at will with the liberties of other men, than the precedent of the extermination of the Canaanites warrants to nations atampering with lives, or wanton invasion of territory. Providence, finally,—the event—has brought suffrages enow to our side which would have been more gracefully tendered to the truth itself. At bloody cost the principles of natural and christian

But in truth, the argument from our Saviour's miracles, which so much recommended itself to the learned divine as in favor of his views on pauperism, will be found, on examination, equally fallacious. That our Lord did not put forth his power in performing miracles to supersede men doing what it is within their own power to do for themselves, is beyond question of course. Who could suppose our Saviour would so encourage idleness? But it is no proof that he would have disapproved of a regular anticipative provision for the destitute, even including able-bodied but unemployed persons, whose case sometimes, by reason of the vicissitudes of the labour market, may have as strong and affecting a claim on society as even the widow and fatherless. For, when it is reasoned that the frequent ministrations of Christ, in cases of sickness brought before him, make a remarkable contrast with the absence of miracles wrought to feed the hungry—we shall scarcely stop to say that he *did* on two or three occasions feed his followers miraculously—it seems forgotten that even in the department of bodily sickness Christ did not supersede the physician's part. His power was put forth in chiefly dealing with diseases beyond the reach of the healing art. His object, of course, was to manifest his super-human power.

Besides other powerful argumentation, Dr. Burns never reasoned more conclusively than when he parried off the objection to a poor rate, that a regular statuted provision, more resembling that of England than what so long prevailed in Scotland, tends to shut up the sources of private beneficence.

He justly held, that, when the state has first done its incumbent part, in

law have been vindicated. Thanks to God, it is now alike true of American as of British territory, slavery cannot breathe on it! But, grave responsibility for the long existence of the evil, and for the costly means of its extinction, rests with those who by their erroneous theories of interpretation, connected the cause of the blessed Gospel with an usurpation and oppression to which its whole spirit is opposed. I congratulate myself, and, were our deceased friend within hearing of my voice, would have congratulated him on the triumph of our principles.

guarding its members against extreme destitution, by what may necessarily be a mere provision of the first necessities, or on the limited scale essential for the protection of industry; in other words by work or bread for the unwillingly idle, or penal coercion for the vagrant; then, individual spontaneous liberality, and ecclesiastical, find their appropriate field, in supplementing the relief, especially of the industrious and religious poor; and this supplementary part they may be expected to do the more cordially, when called to deal with a more defined object, than when the offering of the church or individual was cast indiscriminately into the black gulf of a national destitution: for, notorious it was that the church, and church-going persons, were expected—aided by only occasional help doled out by reluctant heritors—to bear the burden of parochial relief, to the exempting from their adequate proportion of it, abler citizens—protected by their absence from the sabbath sanctuary, or their sojourn, in gratification of their tastes, in other lands: a system at variance with equity, imposing chiefly on the middle and lower classes a responsibility for a great public duty which in reason should be shared by all—reversing the order of nature in making that supplementary which should be prior and radical; that is to say, making contingent on a deficiency in the free will offerings or church collections of a portion of the community, such an authoritative impost as could alone reach all impartially—the neglecter of the Sabbath as well as the observer of its decencies, the churl as well as the liberal, and him who (all fair of course) might be spending his means far away from the distress or cry of the families, it may be, of those who built up with the toils of their strength his fortunes, or defended in the field his inheritance:—a system, in fine, which confused spiritual and secular functions, turning deacons, elders, pastors, into magistrates—for the occasion—or ministers of police.

We do also fully endorse what our deceased friend said in reply to this oft repeated objection to an authoritative poor rate, of its tending to shut up

It only remains that I should refer to the services rendered by my venerable colleague to the Theological seminary. He is well known to have taken a deep interest in that institution from its commencement. And, the direct professorial work which he performed has extended over a considerable number of years. It was gratifying to me to know him to have expressed that one element in his satisfaction in accepting the appointment was, that he would be associated in labour with one, (meaning myself,) with whose theological sentiments he generally agreed. During his very latest years, though nominally on the honoured *emeritus* list, he yet was liberal in his exertions, and constant in his solicitude for the good of Knox' College. When he prelected less, he conversed as often or more. If we had his autumnal decay, we had also his autumnal ripeness, and the benefit of his large experience. His affectionate interest in studious youth secured to them at all times ready access to his counsels; and I have no doubt his memory is affectionately cherished by students as well as by his colleagues. We shall miss his well known form, and

the bowels of private compassion, that never had he found prompter compliance with his calls in behalf of special distress, than when, in his visits to South Britain, he accosted the frank and open hearted Englishmen, who rarely dreamed of alleging as an excuse for shutting his pocket against an urgent appeal to his charity, that he was already held liable by law to do his part in relief of the general poor.

It would lengthen unduly this note to meet objections which may be founded even on recent and present workings of the Scottish law. The equitable principle once recognised, we fear not for its results, under the application of such checks and guards as experience will suggest to our legislators. Already in England, many of the faults long charged on a system which pressed so disproportionately on the residents in certain localities are yielding before the application of the principle of parochial unions—a principle which only needs, we suppose, to be extended to the whole national territory and family whether in England or Scotland:—The principle prevails all over Ireland, in the form of unions of electoral divisions.

well remembered voice, within the walls where he loved to linger, and within which he died. May the spirit of Elijah rest on many of our young Elishas, in the influence of his example of zeal, and laboriousness, and prayerfulness withal! Like other men he had his imperfections; but his excellencies stood out prominent, commanding respect and engaging esteem. Those who differed from him, and contended with him, loved the man. It was not his least praise that by affectionate blandness of manner, united to remarkable powers of conversation, he made himself an ever welcome guest in the humblest christian abode: while he knew and respected those conventional courtesies of refined society, by attention to which he could command the respect of the highest class; and, of which it is a very grave mistake in teachers of religion to suppose the neglect is not injurious to the sacred cause they represent. It may be allowed that a certain impulsiveness of nature led now and again to unduly hasty judgments on men and things: but at the worst, this had a redeeming quality beside it; a more than usual frankness in owning a mistake. And I can testify to another kindred disposition being conspicuous, one of the best tests of a superior mind, that, on questions affecting the public interests, he was ready to receive light from whatever quarter; but especially on matters strictly professional, I have known few who welcomed more cordially the unrestrained interchange of thought with friends or colleagues. I could submit to him a criticism on his views, or proffer at any time a suggestion as to manner and method on any of his spoken or written lucubrations, far more sure of patient, and candid, consideration, than in dealing with lesser men. Father—patriarch—I might say,—of Canadas' Presbyterian Church—rest in thy bed! we know

who said, "he is not dead but sleepeth:" Sleep on a while ; thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days. Mourning relatives may find joy in the thought, that the first morning that has shone on the turf beneath which, the departed lies is that of the day of the Son of Man—of his rising in triumph from the grave, and shedding so blessed a light on its darkness.

Death, take your part : king of terrors, do your worst. We know the limits of your power. It is not much you can do : it is not long. Each returning Sabbath assures us of the completion, in his people, of the triumph over the grave the Saviour has won in his own person. How consoling the thought—even they who shall never know death, being found alive at Christ's coming, but who shall, in a twinkling of an eye, be changed at the sounding of the last trumpet, even they shall not prevent them who are asleep ! " The dead in Christ shall rise first ;" not separate, but together shall they ascend to meet their Lord, and enter with like joy on their common inheritance.

GENERAL APPLICATION.

Let God be glorified ! We have spoken of man, that is, of the grace of God which was with him ; and we would conclude as we began by speaking of Jesus. We would revert in one word to the direct lessons of the text ; desiring to leave on the mind the impression at once of what is consoling and what is admonitory in this passage of Holy writ. It instructs that every circumstance that can affect your future is in the hand of a heavenly friend who

foresees all and controls all : and, if it teaches us that even in dying we may not be selfishly concerned for safety alone, surely it implies that forthwith, and in all things, we should aim at the one great end of promoting God's glory. And, especially, calling to your mind one leading idea, that all our acceptable obedience to God's will presupposes faith in the Saviour's finished work, we invite you by the consideration that He has glorified God in sinner's behalf, to take boldness humbly and penitently, but with steady affiance, to cast yourselves on Him. How pleasing to know that our salvation on this wondrous plan derogates from no perfection of God ! that truth is at one with mercy, as revealed in his Son ; and that even as the Son hath glorified the Father, and the Spirit glorifieth the Son, so do we honour all the Godhead, when, renouncing false refuges, we avail ourselves of a provision in which all harmonise ; and, recognising our obligations to a grace so free and abounding, yield ourselves living sacrifices to God, in a willing performance of every duty, and patient endurance of appointed tribulations !

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